



*Advocating for women's rights
and opportunities in Connecticut*

February 11, 2009

Good evening. My name is Alice Pritchard, and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF). CWEALF is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives. For 35 years, CWEALF has worked alongside the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) to create greater awareness about the issues affecting the status of women of Connecticut and to stand up on their behalf.

I am here today to urge your support for the PCSW and to oppose its elimination.

Since its establishment in 1973, PCSW has served as a critical channel in bringing the voices of women to State government by providing information, research and analysis to elected officials and the general public about all matters concerning the status of Connecticut women.

The Commission convenes numerous workgroups on women's issues such as the Connecticut Women Health's Campaign (CWHC), a statewide group of experts and advocates committed to improving healthcare for women and girls, and the Young Women's Leadership Program (YWLP), a project to promote awareness and empower young women to become leaders. PCSW has also convened coalitions including the CT Women's Agenda, an open forum for all women's organizations and the Congressional District Advisory Councils, a regional coalition to enhance women's access and input to state government. The Commission has also held public hearings throughout the year, giving women of Connecticut a great opportunity to speak to legislators and elected officials to voice out their concerns and needs regarding their economic and financial security.

The PCSW was instrumental in bringing Connecticut the Self-Sufficiency Standard, which calculates how much money working adults need to meet their basic needs without subsidies of any kind, which is specific to our state and makes policy recommendations on workforce development issues, education and job training and public assistance resources. This document has helped legislators and public officials understand the real costs of raising families in Connecticut. Through this understanding, we are able to create programs which better meet the needs of women and their families.

By providing information to state agencies, it saves the state money and improves the performance of these agencies. An example of such service is the sexual harassment training and technical assistance which the Commission has provided state employees and agencies, saving the State government \$400,000. The reduction of sexual harassment complaints also saves state dollars on unnecessary litigation in the future.

The elimination of groups such as the PCSW is a major step backwards in the progress of women's issues in the State. In this difficult economic climate, though we should act swiftly, we must not be so quick to provide a remedy that will further harm the most vulnerable of our population. The elimination of the Commission may seem to help alleviate the financial strain the State is facing in the short term, but the State government will ultimately be doing its citizens a great disservice. It will silence the voices of women and their families in a time when more than ever, their needs and concerns must be heard. By eliminating such an invaluable resource, the State risks undoing the strides in the progress of women's rights and thus the progress of the State and its citizens.

Thank you.